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14. ABSTRACT

This research effort proposes a Systemic Assessment model to examine Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad through the lens of system theory resulting in strategic insights invaluable to those tasked with developing the U.S. counter-strategy. American defense strategists attempting to counter Al-Qaida's global jihad must understand and assess Al-Qaida's strategy in order to successfully counter it. The current state-of-the-art assessment methodology, Effects-Based Operational Assessments (EBOA), has demonstrated significant limitations due to its constraining assumptions and linear formulation. In contrast, this paper proposes Systemic Assessment, based on system theory, which allows for nonlinearity and violations of the EBOA model's constraining assumptions – a property especially useful when examining Al-Qaida's strategy. Al-Qaida's ultimate aim is the establishment of a pure Islamist society led by a legitimate Caliph and governed by the Sharia throughout the entirety of the Muslim lands. The Systemic Assessment model formulated to examine Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad enables American strategic policymakers to identify the successes, failures, and limitations of Al-Qaida's strategy in order to better anticipate the feasible range of future Al-Qaida operations and develop counter-strategies to defeat them.

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TITLE: A SYSTEMIC ASSESSMENT MODEL FOR AL-QAIDA'S GLOBAL JIHAD

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: A Systemic Assessment Model for Al-Qaida's Global Jihad

Author: Major Timothy J. Cook, United States Air Force

Thesis: This research effort proposes a Systemic Assessment model to examine Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad through the lens of system theory resulting in strategic insights invaluable to those tasked with developing the U.S. counter-strategy.

Discussion: Carl von Clausewitz states: "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature." American defense strategists attempting to counter Al-Qaida's global jihad must understand Al-Qaida's strategy in order to "establish the kind of war on which they are embarking." Furthermore, these strategists must understand Al-Qaida's strategic successes and failures to better anticipate the feasible range of Al-Qaida's future operations and develop appropriate counter-strategies. Military commanders conduct assessments at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war, but the current state-of-the-art assessment methodology, Effects-Based Operational Assessments (EBOA), has demonstrated significant limitations due to its constraining assumptions and linear formulation. In contrast, this paper proposes Systemic Assessment, based on system theory, which allows for nonlinearity and violations of the EBOA model's constraining assumptions – properties especially useful when examining Al-Qaida's strategy. Al-Qaida's leadership has made its strategy clear in numerous public and private messages. Al-Qaida's ultimate aim is the establishment of a pure Islamist society led by a legitimate *Caliph* and governed by the *Sharia* throughout the entirety of the Muslim lands. A Systemic Assessment model formulated to examine Al-Qaida's strategy provides a framework for conducting comprehensive assessments (examining all aspects of the strategy) or focused assessments (examining how specific events impact elements of the strategy). A focused assessment of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM's impact on Al-Qaida's strategy demonstrates the utility of Systemic Assessment.

Conclusion: The Systemic Assessment model formulated to examine Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad enables American strategic policymakers to identify the successes, failures, and limitations of Al-Qaida's strategy in order to better anticipate the feasible range of future Al-Qaida operations and develop counter-strategies to defeat them.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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PREFACE

I have been interested in assessing Al-Qaida's strategy since I was first introduced to strategy assessments at Exercise ULCHI FOCUS LENS (UFL) in 2005. At that time I realized the potential importance of strategy assessments and began to volunteer for every strategy assessment opportunity available to me. At the same time, I began to notice all of the assessment reports that addressed Al-Qaida's capabilities and our progress toward defeating Al-Qaida. Most of these reports indicated that we were winning and that Al-Qaida was on the ropes, but something was missing. If Al-Qaida was in such bad trouble, why did it continue with its global jihad? I decided that the answer must be because Al-Qaida's leaders thought they could still win; they must believe their strategy was succeeding or at least could possibly succeed. I attempted to begin a study of Al-Qaida's strategy and assess it in late 2008, but the effort was overcome by daily staff work and my reassignment to 3rd Air Force in early 2009. During my time at 3rd Air Force, I continued to notice the assessment reports indicating Al-Qaida's weakness and even its pending collapse despite expanded activity during the so called "Arab Spring." My interest in assessing Al-Qaida's strategy continued to grow, but I had no time or resources to conduct the assessment.

My selection for the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in 2012 opened the door for me to finally study Al-Qaida's strategy and develop a methodology to assess it. Not only did I finally have the time to do the research, but I also had a mandate to conduct such research and the resources to support it. My research mentor, Dr. Norman Cigar, provided an invaluable depth of knowledge on all matters Al-Qaida and the greater Middle East in general. He provided me with the resources necessary to understand Al-Qaida's strategy and the vast cultural and political interactions with that strategy. LtGen Paul Van Riper (retired) and Dr. Benjamin Jensen provided me with a foundation in system theory that forms the basis for the assessment model developed in this research effort. I am truly grateful for the mentorship and advisement of Dr. Cigar, LtGen Van Riper (retired), and Dr. Jensen. Most importantly, I would like to express my gratitude to my beautiful wife, Jennifer, and my three amazing children, Adrianna, Preston, and EvaLynn, who supported me throughout this endeavor.

1 – INTRODUCTION

Carl von Clausewitz states: "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."[1] The United States has been engaged in a war with Al-Qaida since President George W. Bush declared the "War on Terror" on September 20, 2001, in an address to a joint session of Congress. At that point, Al-Qaida had already been in a declared state of jihad against the United States for over five years.[2] Despite Al-Qaida's attacks on the World Trade Center, the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the USS Cole, American policy makers failed to make Al-Qaida a priority until the 9/11 attacks. Since then, American instruments of national power have been heavily engaged in efforts to eliminate the threat Al-Qaida poses to American citizens and interests – yet the threat remains.

The United States must heed the advice of Clausewitz in its fight against Al-Qaida if it is to succeed. Defense strategists must fully understand "the kind of war on which they are embarking." To gain this understanding, they must first understand the kind of war on which Al-Qaida has embarked. They must understand clearly what Al-Qaida seeks to accomplish and how its leaders intend to accomplish it; they must understand Al-Qaida's strategy. Furthermore, these strategists must understand the relationship between the current strategic environment and Al-Qaida's strategic objective; they must assess Al-Qaida's strategy. The American defense community has made great strides to better understand Al-Qaida's organization, culture, and tactics, but it has done little to fully understand Al-Qaida's strategy, and even less to assess it. Even if defense strategists wanted to assess Al-Qaida's strategy, they would not be able to find a methodology in joint doctrine suitable for such a purpose.

Joint assessment doctrine focuses on determining the effectiveness of joint force, functional component, and service component operations. Joint Publication 3-0 broadly defines assessment as "A continuous process that measures the overall effectiveness of employing joint force capabilities during military operations."[3] It then further clarifies that assessments determine "the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating a condition, or achieving an objective."[4] Then Captains Timothy Cook and Clinton Clark developed a methodology for conducting such assessments at the operational level of war in their article "A Practical Approach to Effects Based Operational Assessments (EBOA)."[5] The EBOA model produced results during Major Combat Operation (MCO) exercise scenarios that proved more informative than those of previous models; however, real-world application revealed significant limitations.

This research effort proposes a Systemic Assessment model to examine Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad through the lens of system theory resulting in strategic insights invaluable to those tasked with developing the U.S. counter-strategy. The following discourse remains at the unclassified level, which allows for a thorough derivation of Al-Qaida's strategy but limits the data available for a thorough strategy assessment. However, open source resources provide enough information to demonstrate the assessment. The results of this effort are: a broadly applicable strategy assessment methodology (Systemic Assessment), a clear articulation of Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad, a specific Systemic Assessment model formulation to examine Al-Qaida's strategy, and a focused assessment to provide initial conclusions and demonstrate the utility of the model.

2 – STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Military commanders conduct assessments at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. Tactical assessments are concerned with the outcomes of tactical actions and include such activities as battle damage assessments and munitions effectiveness assessments. Operational assessments are concerned with the progress of a campaign and its contribution to the overall war effort. Strategic assessments are concerned with progress toward achieving the strategic purpose of the war.[6] This section reviews two strategy assessment models, one business application and one military application, and then proposes a system theory-based strategy assessment methodology, Systemic Assessment.

2.1 – Strategy Assessment Models

Private sector strategy assessment models provide the foundation for military strategy assessment models. Business strategists have developed numerous assessment models to help inform strategy and execution decisions. An example of a widely-used model is the Balanced Scorecard developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton. The Balanced Scorecard was originally designed as a business management tool to help senior managers assess their company from multiple perspectives in order to compile a comprehensive picture of the company's performance. The model focused on four perspectives to answer the following questions:

- *How do customers see us? (customer perspective)*
- *What must we excel at? (internal perspective)*
- *Can we continue to improve and create value? (innovation and learning perspective)*
- *How do we look to shareholders? (financial perspective)[7]*

Once these questions are answered, managers can take action to improve performance in areas that are lacking and monitor progress toward improvement. Generalizing and summarizing the Balanced Scorecard, the analyst measures performance in multiple objective areas to evaluate

execution and resource allocation policies. Based on this generalization, the Balanced Scorecard has also been used in public sector applications where profit is not a concern. CompStat, the famous New York City crime database implemented by Mayor Rudy Giuliani, is one example of a successful public sector adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard methodology.

The military has also employed strategy assessment models similar to the Balanced Scorecard. Operational assessment teams at combatant commands (COCOMs) have frequently employed the Effects-Based Operational Assessment (EBOA) model to evaluate the effectiveness of their COCOM's strategy. The EBOA model is similar to the Balanced Scorecard model in that it provides the commander an assessment of his strategy by measuring operations in multiple objective areas. However, it includes an additional layer of analysis by including two independent assessments for each objective: performance and effectiveness. The performance assessment is concerned with how well tasked units execute their designated tasks. The effectiveness assessment is concerned with the command's progress toward achieving the commander's objectives. The EBOA model calls for comparison of the performance and effectiveness assessments to judge the appropriateness of the strategy. In short, the EBOA model provides an analytic framework to examine causal linkages between task accomplishment and objective achievement, which are central to effects-based planning.

The EBOA model relies on an Effects-Based Operations (EBO) planning construct, which uses the strategy-to-task structure. EBO is a reductionist method of planning that reduces the mission into a list of tasks that, in sum, planners believe will result in mission success. The strategy-to-task is a hierarchical methodology that EBO uses to produce the task list. Strategy-to-task logically links the mission to the tasks through three successive divisions. The first division reduces the *mission* into a group of *objectives,* which planners believe sum to produce

mission accomplishment. Second, planners repeat the process by reducing *objectives* into *effects,* which logically sum to objective accomplishment. Finally, planners reduce each *effect* to a list of *tasks,* which they believe sum to produce the desired effects. Therefore, each *task* is linked to the *mission* through the following logic chain:

$$\sum \text{Tasks} = \text{Effect} \rightarrow \sum \text{Effects} = \text{Objective} \rightarrow \sum \text{Objectives} = \text{Mission}.$$

The EBOA model injects Measures of Performance (MoPs) at the Task level and Measures of Effectiveness (MoEs) at the Effect level. These MoPs and MoEs are then independently "rolled up" using a linear weighted-additive model (weighted averages) to produce performance and effectiveness assessments for the higher levels in the hierarchy. Figure 1 graphically depicts the general EBOA methodology for conducting the performance and effectiveness assessments. The performance and effectiveness assessments form the basis of the causal linkage analysis.
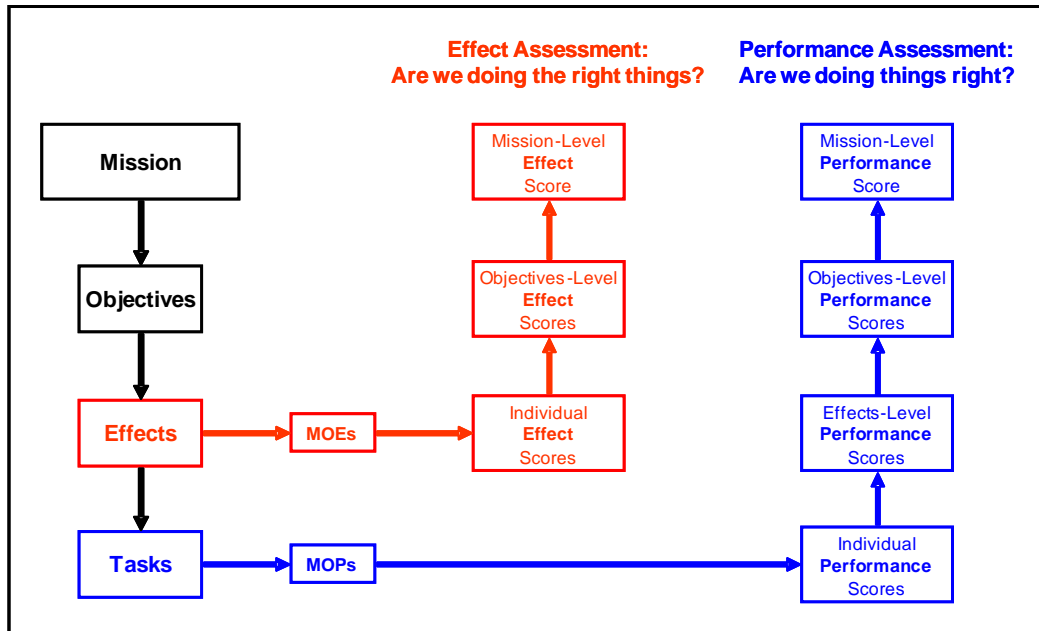

Figure 1: EBOA Model Overview.[8]

The significant contribution of the EBOA model lies in its methodology for conducting causal linkage analysis. Planners develop solutions to operational problems based on their understanding of the operational environment. They plan tactical tasks because their understanding

of the environment leads them to believe there is a causal linkage between the task and one or more

desired effects (i.e. if I take action A, then B will result). However, warfare is an extremely complex

endeavor in which no planner can fully account for all variables. Therefore, the commander must

continually assess these causal linkages throughout mission execution in order to respond effectively

to uncertainty. The EBOA model provides a means for conducting causal linkage analysis "through

the juxtaposition of effect and performance results."[9] By comparing the performance and

effectiveness assessments, the commander can draw inferences on the correlation between his

operations and his objectives. Figure 2 provides a summary of interpretations and implications

for performance and effectiveness comparisons.

High		
	Performance: We have done little to affect the enemy system Effect: We are achieving our desired effect Interpretation: Situation is different than expected. We have exerted much less effort than expected to achieve our desired effect. Shifting resources may be an option, but could entail assuming risk.	Performance: We have significantly degraded the enemy system Effect: We are achieving our desired effect Interpretation: Situation as expected. We have exerted significant effort to achieve our effect. OAT may recommend shifting resources with low operational risk.
	Performance: We have done little to affect the enemy system Effect: The enemy is denying us our desired effects Interpretation: Situation as expected. We have exerted minimal effort and are not achieving effect. Look for opportunities to shift resources to this objective.	Performance: We have significantly degraded the enemy system Effect: The enemy is denying us our desired effects Interpretation: Situation is different than expected. We have exerted significant effort and not achieved the desired effect. This could indicate a faulty understanding of the system and we need to adjust our plan to go after the "right things."
Low		

Effect (left axis label); Low ————— Performance ————→ High (bottom axis label)

Figure 2: Generalized Performance and Effectiveness Comparison Interpretations.[10]

The EBOA model proved useful during Major Combat Operation (MCO) exercise

scenarios in Korea,[11] but less target centric environments such as counterterrorist operations in

northern Iraq revealed EBOA's limitations.[12] The EBOA model's limitations result from its (and

EBO's) reductionist approach to modeling war. It models war as a linear system in which the sum of its parts equals the whole. Furthermore, it explicitly assumes:

- mutually exclusive tasks and effects – no interactions or overlap;

- collectively exhaustive tasks and effects – every possibility is accounted for;

- preferential independence – changing one parameter does not change the importance of another system parameter; and

- linear, additive relationships between tasks, effects, and measures.

In a target centric, MCO exercise scenario, these assumptions do not impact the assessment adversely because human interaction is overshadowed by machine action – both the machinery of war and the computers simulating combat. MCO exercise scenarios rarely involve surprises due to their emphasis on practicing staff processes rather than actual warfighting, which contributes to their apparent linearity. However, these assumptions are much more restrictive when applied to real-world operations. Real war violates all of the EBOA model's assumptions: almost everything in war interacts; the plan never accounts for every possibility; preferences (priorities) change relative to battlefield conditions; and the relationship between tasks, effects, and measures is rarely linear. The next section proposes Systemic Assessment as an alternative to EBOA that is not limited by linearity or the constraining assumptions of EBOA.

2.2 – Systemic Assessment

Carl von Clausewitz described the nature of war as a holy trinity consisting of enmity, chance, and reason; the interaction of which resembles the unpredictable motion of "an object suspended between three magnets."[13] In other words, the participants in war interact with each other to produce nonlinear and unpredictable outcomes. Therefore, a linear, reductionist strategy assessment model is inherently flawed because the whole of war is *not* equal to the sum of its

parts. War is more appropriately characterized as a complex adaptive system, which Andrew

Ilachinski defines as "macroscopic collections of simple (and typically nonlinearly) interacting

units that are endowed with the ability to evolve and adapt to a changing environment."[14]

Therefore, a strategy assessment model should follow an approach grounded in nonlinear system

theory: a systemic approach. The EBO strategy-to-task construct does not offer a suitable

framework for a systemic approach to assessments. This section first describes the strategy

construct that provides the structure for the proposed Systemic Assessment methodology then

articulates the Systemic Assessment process.

Many strategists and doctrine writers have published useful definitions of strategy. This

paper highlights two of these definitions to establish terms of reference and structure for the

Systemic Assessment model. The first definition is that of Carl von Clausewitz: "Strategy is the

use of the engagement for the purpose of the war. …strategy must also consider its chief means

of execution, the fighting forces." [15] The *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and*

Associated Terms provides the second definition of strategy: "A prudent idea or set of ideas for

employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve

theater, national, and/or multinational objectives."[16] Clausewitz's definition relates to what

modern doctrine refers to as the operational level of war while the joint doctrine definition

relates to the strategic level of war. However, both definitions indicate that there are three

elements of strategy: ends, ways, and means. Colin Gray, one of the most respected modern

strategists, referred to ends, ways, and means as "the classic formula for the strategy function."[17]

Ends are "the purpose of the war" or "theater, national, and/or multinational objectives." Ways

are "the use of the engagement" or "ideas for employing the instruments of national power."

Finally, means are "the fighting forces" or "the instruments of national power." This study

further defines the elements of strategy in order to provide a structural framework for the subsequent strategy assessment model.

Ends are the "why" of strategy and consist of the *objective* and associated *end states*.

objective: "The clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which every operation is directed."[18]

end state: "The set of required conditions that defines achievement of the commander's objectives."[19]

Ways are the methods employed in order to achieve the *ends*. For the purpose of this paper, the *ways* consist of *lines of effort* with associated *intermediate objectives*.

line of effort: "In the context of joint operation planning, using the purpose (cause and effect) to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions by linking multiple tasks and missions."[20]

intermediate objective: An objective that must be accomplished before the end states can be achieved; for example, a phase objective.[21]

Means are the resources used in order to execute the *ways*. One useful method of characterizing *means* is through the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) framework. This paper restricts the scope of the assessment model to *ends* and *ways*; therefore, the strategy formulation and subsequent strategy assessment model do not include *means*. However, Appendix II contains a brief discussion of Al-Qaida's *means* in the DOTMLPF framework.

Systemic Assessment employs the strategy equation just described for structure and consists of four components as depicted in Figure 4: Measurement, Systemic Analysis, Storylines, and Feedback. The first component of the model is Measurement and consists of independently measuring the ends and the ways. MoEs measure end states, and MoPs measure intermediate objectives as depicted in Figure 3. The subsequent Systemic Analysis requires the analyst to rely heavily on logical explanation rather than mathematical rigor to produce useful

insights. To emphasize the need for explanation, Systemic Assessment presents MoEs and MoPs

in the form of questions rather than statements of specific data requirements. The answers to

these questions should articulate the difference between the desired results and the current status.

These answers may include data that is countable, categorical, or otherwise descriptive; however,

they must be objective. As in the EBOA model, the analyst must also consider MoEs and MoPs

in isolation when collecting the measurements in order to prevent inducing bias.
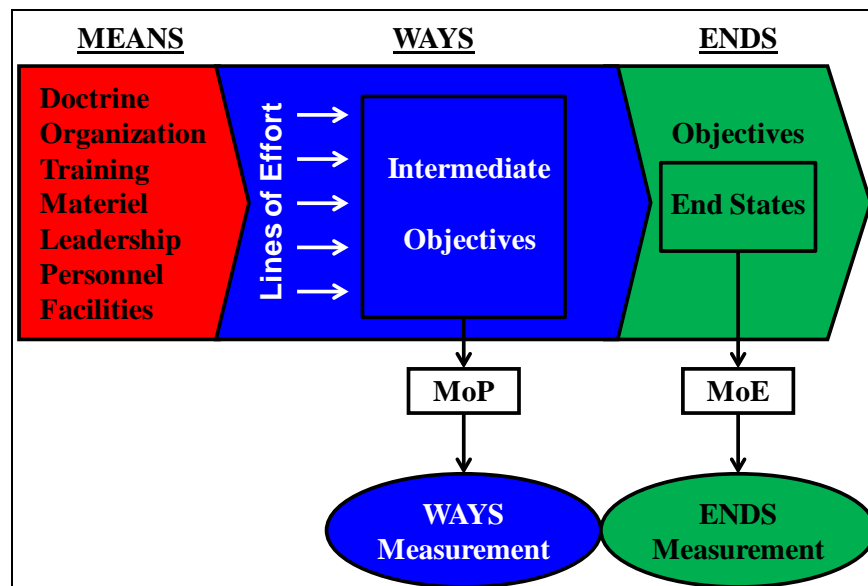

Figure 3: Systemic Assessment: Measurement

The second component, Systemic Analysis, expands the EBOA model's causal linkage

analysis from cause and effect analysis to a systems approach to analysis. Systemic Analysis

involves logically and intuitively examining the relationships between all elements of the ways

and ends over time. In other words, Systemic Analysis seeks to identify interactions and causal

relationships between ways, between ends, and between ways and ends (see Figure 4). Systemic

Analysis also seeks to identify and describe the influence relationships between all elements of

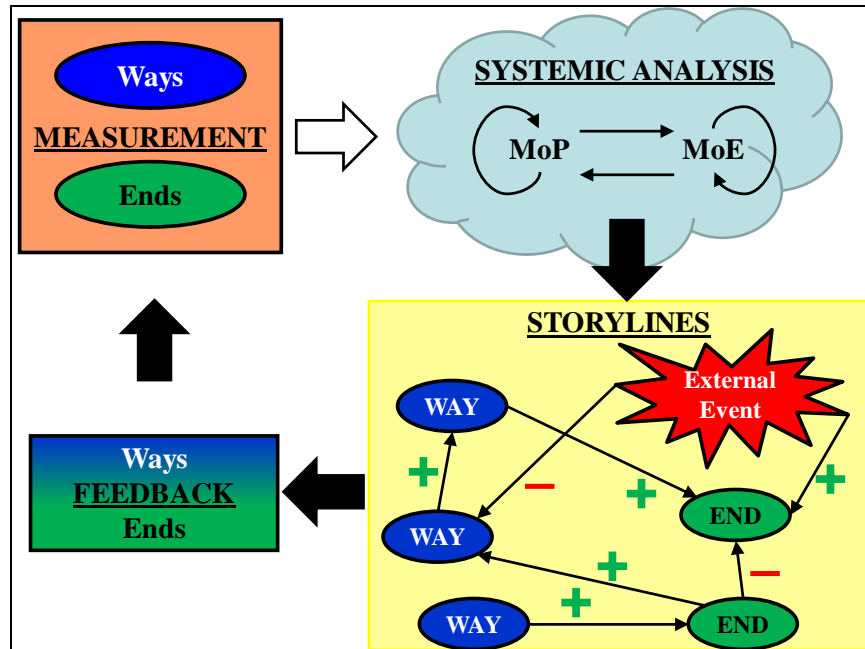strategy while being mindful of external influences and nonlinearity.

Figure 4: Systemic Assessment Process

The third component, Storylines, consists of describing the interactions and influence relationships between the elements of the strategy equation that Systemic Analysis uncovers. The Storylines can be expressed graphically or as a narrative (see Figure 4). The Storylines serve as an updated systemic design against which the commander can update his understanding of the operational environment and judge the appropriateness of the strategy.

The fourth component, Feedback, communicates the results of comparing the Storylines to the design underpinning the current strategy. The Feedback depends on what new information the Storylines uncover that lead to recommendations. The analyst may recommend changes to the ways (the plan) if the underlying influence relationships change or even the ends if the new understanding reveals a sufficiently different operational environment than originally understood. The nature of the recommendation may also drive requirements for new means.

Systemic Assessment represents a perpetual feedback loop that repeatedly updates the commander's understanding of the operational environment to inform strategy guidance decisions. Systemic Assessment is not bound by the limiting assumptions of the EBOA model

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and strives for greater understanding of the full system rather than reducing the system to independent components. By applying Systemic Assessment to Al-Qaida's strategy, strategic policymakers can better understand the system for which they are producing policy and develop a better informed counter-strategy.

3 – AL-QAIDA'S STRATEGY FOR GLOBAL JIHAD

3.1 – Sources for Al-Qaida's Strategy

Sayyid Qutb, who led Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s, has proven to be one of the most influential early Salafi jihadist strategists. Qutb envisioned a network of jihadists organized to confront the near enemies, apostate rulers in Muslim lands; and the far enemies, the West. Specifically, he blamed the influence of Western secularism and materialism for Egypt's problems and advocated armed revolution to overthrow apostate Muslim regimes and usher in an Islamist state under the *Sharia*. He cast the crisis in Egypt as a global, ideological confrontation setting the foundations of the transnational jihad movement. He also envisioned a vanguard organization overseeing the global jihad, setting the stage for the rise of Al-Qaida.[22]

Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, a prominent Palestinian scholar, was greatly influenced by Qutb's ideas during his time as an Islamic jurisprudence Ph.D. student at Al Azhar University in Cairo. After completing his degree, he moved to Saudi Arabia for a professorship at King Abdul Aziz University where he helped establish networks that organized, trained, and equipped *mujahidin* for jihad in the Afghan-Soviet War. These networks would continue to serve as a key organizational element of the global jihad movement even after the war. During this time, Azzam greatly influenced Osama Bin Laden who was one of his students at the university. He mentored Bin Laden in the jihadist ideals expressed by Qutb and the organizational lessons of the Afghan-Soviet War. Bin Laden relied heavily on what he had learned from Azzam and on the jihadist networks Azzam helped establish when he founded Al-Qaida.[23]

Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian born physician widely believed to be Al-Qaida's primary theologian and strategist, became the leader of Al-Qaida following Bin Laden's death on May 1, 2011. When he was just 14 years old, Al-Zawahiri joined the Muslim Brotherhood

where he became a student and a follower of Sayyid Qutb. Fourteen years later, he joined the more violently influenced Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ).[24] After a short jail stint for his connections with the perpetrators of Anwar Sadat's assassination, he traveled to Pakistan near the Afghanistan border to work in a hospital where he treated wounded *mujahidin* and other victims of the Afghan-Soviet War. Here, he built relationships with many of the *mujahidin* and even ventured into Afghanistan to witness some of the fighting first-hand. Following the war, Al-Zawahiri rose to leadership in the EIJ, carrying on the effort to establish the *Sharia* in Egypt by coupling violent jihad with Salafist idealism as Qutb had taught him.[25] Eventually, Al-Zawahiri's jihadist effort expanded beyond Egypt to a global effort when he signed the World Islamic Front's declaration of jihad, cementing his role as the top deputy to Osama Bin Laden and eventual heir to the Al-Qaida organization.[26]

Al-Qaida continues to hold a rich debate in a multitude of online and published forums concerning what Western institutions would refer to as operational art. One of the most significant writings published in this forum is the compilation of 'Abd Al-'Aziz Al-Muqrin's writings into the book *A Practical Course for Guerrilla War*. In this work, Al-Muqrin synthesizes the ideas of secular military thinkers such as Carl von Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Mao Zedong with Salafist ideology and *mujahidin* experiences. The result is a Salafi jihadist doctrinal publication addressing guerrilla war at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

There are countless Salafi jihadist authors from which to draw insights into Al-Qaida's strategy for conducting global jihad. Besides those already named, some of the most significant are Hasan Al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood; Muhammad Al-Aalam Faraj, founder of Jama'at Al-Jihad (Group of Holy struggle) responsible for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat; Abu Bakr Naji, an influential Al-Qaida strategist; Muhammad Khalil Al-

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Hakaymah, a leading Al-Qaida strategist; and Abu Musab Al-Suri whose 1600-page book, *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, is considered a foundational jihadist work.[27] The works of these authors continue to greatly influence the Salafi jihad movement, including Al-Qaida. However, the words of Al-Qaida's leadership provide the most relevant insights into Al-Qaida's strategy. Much of what they have communicated is heavily influenced by this key body of writers. Al-Muqrin's work is another relevant source as it synthesizes much of the larger body of Al-Qaida doctrinal thought into a concise doctrine manual – much more useful to the average *mujahidin* than Al-Suri's 1600-page book. Therefore, the derivation of Al-Qaida's strategy that follows is drawn primarily from Bin Laden's and Al-Zawahiri's translated messages and from Al-Muqrin's *A Practical Course for Guerrilla War*.

Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri maintain three strategic themes throughout their messages that aid in deriving Al-Qaida's strategy: grievances, grievance solutions, and justification for jihad. There are many other reoccurring topics, such as the numerous forays into Islamic history, but the three afore-mentioned themes are the most relevant to strategy. Bin Laden, a Saudi, initially formed his arguments around events and people in the Arabian Peninsula and Palestine. Al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian, initially formed his arguments around events and people in Egypt. However, they both evolved a global perspective and presented a unified message from which to derive Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad. Bin Laden's and Al-Zawahiri's messages serve as the primary sources for deriving the elements of the strategy equation with additional input from Al-Muqrin's doctrinal writings.

Al-Qaida's three strategic themes are set in the "Muslim lands." Al-Zawahiri defines the Muslim lands as stretching "from Chechnya in the north to Somalia in the south and from Eastern Turkestan in the east to Morocco in the west."[28] Figure 5 graphically depicts this region.

This description provides the extreme points of what Al-Qaida considers Muslim lands, but it does not provide a definite boundary or a list of countries that comprise the Muslim lands.
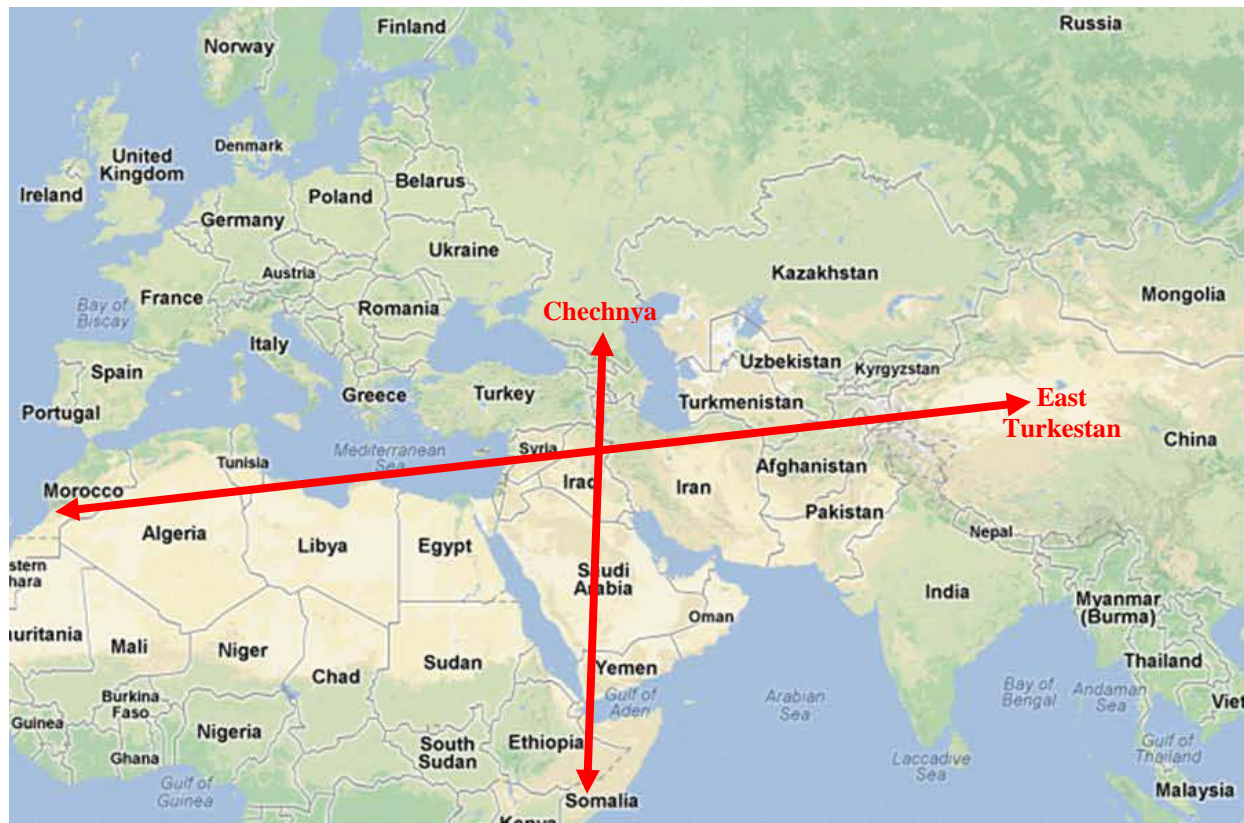

Figure 5: Al-Zawahiri's Definition of the Muslim Lands.

The first strategic theme is that of Al-Qaida's grievances. Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri consistently refer to the West's persistent repression of Muslims, specifically by America, Israel, and their allies – the Jewish-Crusader Alliance. They also bring grievances against the "apostate" Muslim leaders who they claim conspire with the Jewish-Crusader Alliance in return for American support that underwrites their grip on power. The Al-Qaida leaders repeatedly highlight Muslims suffering as a result of occupation, violence, poverty; and religious, political, and social repression. They regularly lament American bases in the Middle East and the existence of Israel as crusader occupation of Muslim lands intended to prevent the formation of a true Islamist state. They repeatedly cite violence by the Israelis against Palestinians, Americans

against Iraqis and Afghans, Russians against Chechens (which they blame on American support), and Indians in Kashmir (which they also blame on American support). Economically, they claim, "You steal our wealth and oil at paltry prices,"[29] and they frequently blame economic sanctions and corrupt government officials for leaving the vast majority of Muslims in poverty. Religiously, politically, and socially they condemn the rulers of Muslim lands for imposing Western legal and social structures rather than the *Sharia*. They also lament the West's broader cultural impact on the *Umma* such as secularized education, media, and society. Notably, though, the most urgent of these grievances is the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The second strategic theme is that of Al-Qaida's proposed grievance solutions. Bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, and Al-Muqrin all maintain a consistent message that the objective for the *Umma* is a unified Islamist state completely governed by the *Sharia* and led by a legitimate *Caliph*; no other solution will address all of their grievances. They claim this solution can only be accomplished through jihad.[30] They call for jihad to liberate Muslim lands from the Israelis (Palestine) and their Crusader allies (Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.).[31] They also call on Muslims to depose the corrupt Muslim regimes who refuse to implement the *Sharia*. Al-Zawahiri, in particular, calls for the establishment of a Muslim state "in the heart of the Muslim world" to serve as the basis for the *Caliphate* and a jihadist base of operations from which to expand the effort to liberate Muslim lands and unite the *Umma*.[32] While their concerns are immediate, they maintain a long-term outlook in which they expect the jihad to last at least multiple decades or even over a century before producing their desired results.[33]

The third strategic theme is Al-Qaida's justification for jihad. This theme serves three purposes: to address scholarly criticisms of their methods, to persuade others to join the movement, and to reassure the *mujahidin* of the justice of their cause. Bin Laden and Al-

Zawahiri use theology, history, and Realpolitik to justify violent jihad in pursuit of their objectives. The theological arguments are centered on Islamic just war theory (as they interpret it) and frequently reference the Quran or the *hadith* for legitimacy. They cite passages such as "The Verse of the Sword"[34] to advocate for violent jihad. They also contend that they are engaged in a defensive jihad against the occupying forces of the Jews and Crusaders; therefore, it is every Muslim's duty to partake in the jihad.[35] A Quranic passage they use is:

> *Believers, why, when it is said to you, "Go and fight in God's way," do you dig your heels into the earth? Do you prefer this world to the life to come? How small the enjoyment of this world is, compared with the life to come! If you do not go out and fight, God will punish you severely and put others in your place, but you cannot harm Him in any way: God has power over all things.[36]*

They also make frequent historical references to great Islamic victories such as in the Soviet-Afghan war and the conquests of Saladin to boost the morale of the *muhahidin* and to draw others to their cause. Finally they appeal to Realpolitik by focusing on the extreme imbalance in military and economic power between Western and Muslim states, which they claim puts the very existence of Islam at risk. They frequently emphasize this point with historical reference to the American use of the atomic bombs against Japan at the end of World War II.

The three strategic themes form the basis of Al-Qaida's strategic design. They frame the environment, the desired environment, a path to success, and justification for action. The following sections draw on the three themes to derive Al-Qaida's ends and ways that will provide the structure for the Systemic Assessment.

3.2 – Al-Qaida's Ends

Al-Qaida's strategic objective is to secure the ideals of the Salafist movement, namely to recreate religious, social, and political order in the image of Islamic society during the time of

Mohammad and the half-century of Islamic unity following his death. In the words of Al-Zawahiri: "[I]t is the hope of the Muslim nation to restore its fallen *Caliphate* and regain its lost glory."[37] Bin Laden agrees: "[O]ur concern is that our *Umma* unites either under the Words of the Book of God or His Prophet, and that this nation should establish the righteous *Caliphate* of our *Umma*…."[38] Al-Muqrin elegantly summarizes these points when he states, "As far as the *mujahidin* are concerned, the goal for which they are striving is a high and noble one, namely the call for a pure Islamic system free from defects and infidel elements, one based on the Book [i.e., the Quran] and the *Sunnah*."[39] Al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden, and Al-Muqrin communicate a unified message that expresses Al-Qaida's strategic objective.

Bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, and Al-Muqrin also provide insights into the interconnected conditions that define achievement of their objective, the associated strategic end states. The first condition is the expulsion of all foreign occupation forces from Muslim lands. These forces prop up corrupt Muslim rulers who prevent the establishment of the *Sharia*. The second condition is the return of Muslim lands under non-Muslim authority to Muslim control. Examples of these lands include modern day Israel, Chechnya, and Kashmir. The third condition is the establishment of the *Sharia* throughout the Muslim lands. Establishing the *Sharia* involves overthrowing corrupt Muslim regimes who refuse to implement the *Sharia*. The fourth condition is the territorial unification of Muslim lands. Al-Zawahiri's definition of the Muslim lands is depicted in Figure 5. The fifth condition is the restoration of the *Caliphate* to lead the *Umma*. The *Caliph* holds authority over the *Umma* as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad.

The preceding discussion highlights the first element of the strategy equation, the objective and associated end states, which are restated for clarity below.

> **Objective:** Establishment of a pure Islamist society led by a legitimate *Caliph* and governed by the *Sharia* throughout the entirety of the Muslim lands.

End States: All foreign forces leave Muslim lands.
  : All Muslim lands are under legitimate Muslim authority.
  : All Muslim lands are governed by the *Sharia*.
  : All Muslim lands are territorially united.
  : An established, legitimate *Caliphate* is in place.

3.3 – Al-Qaida's Ways

Al-Zawahiri summarizes Al-Qaida's plan for conducting global jihad in an October 2005

letter to the former Al-Qaida in Iraq leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zawahiri writes:

> *It has always been my belief that the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world, specifically in the Levant, Egypt, and the neighboring states of the Peninsula and Iraq; however, the center would be in the Levant and Egypt.*[40]

He then follows with a description of his vision of a four-phase plan for jihad operations in Iraq.

The first stage is to expel the United States from Iraq. The second stage is to establish a stable

Islamist state in Iraq and proclaim the *Caliphate*. The third stage is to extend the jihad to

neighboring states in order to expand the reach of the *Caliphate*. The final stage is to confront

Israel and secure return of the Muslim holy lands to Muslim control.[41]

Al-Qaida's recommendation for waging a guerrilla war in Iraq was in the spirit of Al-

Muqrin's doctrinal writings. Al-Muqrin's doctrine is modeled after Mao's "People's War"

approach to insurgency consisting of three phases. The first phase is Attrition, or Strategic

Defense. During this phase, the *mujahidin* must protect and expand the movement in order to

increase combat strength and begin delegitimizing the government forces; hit and run attacks

prove too costly to the government's security forces and they begin to retreat to their secure

bases. The second phase is Relative Strategic Balance, or the Policy of a Thousand Cuts.

During this phase, the *mujahidin* control significant areas of land from which they can begin to

administer the *Sharia* and develop conventional forces; *mujahidin* forces conduct raids and attacks against the government's sources of power gaining momentum for final capitulation. The final phase is Military Decision, or Final Attack. During this phase, the *mujahidin* use their now superior military force to defeat the government forces in a decisive campaign resulting in regime change.[42]

The plan Al-Zawahiri proposed to Al-Zarqawi was specific to Iraq; however, it parallels Al-Qaida's strategic plan for successful global jihad. The strategic plan is an extension of Al-Muqrin's operational strategy. Phase one of the global jihad plan consists of defending the global movement, building jihadist alliances, and growing the *mujahidin* force. At the same time, the *mujahidin* conduct spectacular terrorist attacks to convince the foreign forces to withdraw their forces, thus securing a jihadist sanctuary to serve as a base of operations. Bin Laden promoted Afghanistan as this base in April 2001 when he called, in a recorded message, on the participants of the International Conference of Deobandis to protect and support the Taliban.[43] Al-Zawahiri believed Iraq could serve as this base in 2005 at the peak of Iraq instability, as his plan communicated to Al-Zarqawi.

Phase two begins with establishment of an Islamist state, which can serve as the basis for the *Caliphate* and a safe haven for the global jihadist movement. During this phase, the Islamists organize, train, and equip a regular military force and continue to grow and expand the jihadist movement to neighboring states. The Islamist state supports Islamist regime changes in other Muslim lands expanding the *Caliphate*'s area of influence, increasing its legitimacy and building momentum for the unification of the *Umma*.

Phase three begins with the consolidation of enough military force to confront Israel and her allies directly. The purpose of this phase is to liberate Palestine and complete unification of

the *Umma* under the religious and political authority of the *Caliphate*. With Israel and her allies defeated, the *mujahidin* can incorporate the remaining Muslim lands into the *Caliphate*.

Al-Zawahiri issued a communiqué in March 2006 that provided further insight into Al-Qaida's ways. This message claimed Al-Qaida would "carry on the fight on four related fronts."[44] The first front is to inflict losses against the West with an emphasis on economic losses. This front consists of attacks on Western economic infrastructure, boycotts of Western goods and services, and "depriv[ing] the western crusader from stealing the Muslims' oil which is being drained as the biggest robbery in history."[45] The second front is to expel the foreign forces from Islamic lands, specifically Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. This consists of inflicting heavy losses on the occupation forces while preventing the defeat of the *mujahidin* so as to draw the conflict out and cause the occupying country's economy to collapse. The third front is to change the corrupt regimes governing Muslim lands. This consists of a call on the elite in these countries to "gather and consult with each other to take on the responsibility of changing these corrupt regimes."[46] The fourth front is to increase *dawa*, Islamic proselytizing. This front includes educating the *Umma* on the virtues of the *Sharia* and the pitfalls of non-Islamic systems while preaching Islam in an attempt to convert non-believers to Islam.[47]

The second element of the strategy equation is derived from the strategic phases of global jihad, Al-Zawahiri's four fronts, and Al-Muqrin's doctrine. There are four lines of effort corresponding to Al-Zawahiri's four fronts and described as the common elements of national power: diplomatic, information, military, and economic. Al-Qaida's diplomatic efforts are focused on coalition building – maintaining, managing, and growing its network of like-minded jihadists. Its information efforts focus on damaging the popularity and credibility of occupation forces and corrupt Muslim regimes while also defending Al-Qaida's legitimacy and supporting

its operations. Military and economic efforts are focused on damaging the occupation forces and corrupt Muslim regimes. Al-Qaida's explicit lines of effort and their associated intermediate objectives follow.

Lines of Effort and Associated Intermediate Objectives:

Diplomatic LOE:
- Establish and maintain a global network of affiliated jihadist organizations.

Information LOE:
- Recruit sufficient *mujahidin* to confront occupation and corrupt government forces.
- Legitimize the movement to the *Umma*.
- Inspire independent jihad action.
- Decrease foreign popular support for its government's occupation of Muslim lands.
- Decrease popular support for corrupt Muslim regimes.

Military LOE:
- Force a protracted war.
- Inflict heavy casualties on occupation forces.

Economic LOE:
- Collapse the economies of the occupation forces' countries.
- Prevent exploitation of Muslim resources by the infidels.

4 – SYSTEMIC ASSESSMENT MODEL FOR AL-QAIDA'S GLOBAL JIHAD

This section applies Systemic Assessment to Al-Qaida's global jihad strategy as derived in Section 3. The following formulation provides a framework that analysts can use to conduct a comprehensive assessment of Al-Qaida's strategy, or they can conduct a focused assessment to examine how a particular event or operation systemically impacted the strategy. The subsequent demonstration employs the latter approach, examining the systemic impact of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) on Al-Qaida's strategy.

As with any assessment, Systemic Assessment is subject to various parameters. The parameters for Systemic Assessments are time horizon, periodicity, and geographical area of concern. The time horizon is determined by the scope of the assessment: comprehensive or focused. The following demonstration is a focused assessment of OIF's impact; therefore, the time horizon begins with the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and ends at the close of 2012. However, some measures may require information predating the invasion to provide context. Periodicity is determined by major strategic events rather than set time intervals implying that the different measures may each be assessed at different periods. The geographical area of concern is the whole of the Muslim lands as defined by Al-Zawahiri and depicted in Figure 5.

4.1 – Systemic Assessment Model Formulation

The model formulation provides the starting point for the first step of Systemic Assessment – Measurement. The strategy provides the structure for the assessment and the entry points for MoEs and MoPs. The following depicts the Systemic Assessment model formulation using Al-Qaida's strategy derived in Section 4 to provide the assessment structure for the MoEs and MoPs.

End State: All foreign forces leave Muslim lands.
>   **MoE:** Do foreign occupation forces remain in Muslim lands? What is their disposition?

End State: All Muslim lands are under legitimate Muslim authority.
>   **MoE:** How many Muslim lands remain under foreign authority?
>   **MoE:** How many Muslim lands remain under illegitimate Muslim authority?
>   **MoE:** Are any of the Muslim lands transitioning from foreign or illegitimate authority to a legitimate Muslim authority?

End State: All Muslim lands are governed by the *Sharia*.
>   **MoE:** How many of the Muslim lands are governed by the Salafist vision of the *Sharia*?
>   **MoE:** Have any Muslim lands progressed toward or regressed from law based on the *Sharia*?

End State: All Muslim lands are territorially united.
>   **MoE:** Are Muslim lands uniting to form a single Islamic state?

End State: An established, legitimate *Caliphate* is in place.
>   **MoE:** Has a legitimate *Caliphate* been established?
>   **MoE:** Are any of the Muslim lands positioned to eventually house the *Caliphate*?

Diplomatic LOE:
>   **Intermediate Objective:** Establish and maintain a global network of affiliated jihadist organizations.
>>   **MoP:** How many jihadist organizations are affiliated with Al-Qaida?
>>   **MoP:** How stable are the linkages between Al-Qaida and its affiliates?

Information LOE:
>   **Intermediate Objective:** Recruit sufficient *mujahidin* to confront occupation and corrupt government forces.
>>   **MoP:** What is the force ratio of *mujahidin* forces to foreign forces in Muslim lands occupied by foreign forces?
>>   **MoP:** What is the force ratio of *mujahidin* forces to corrupt government forces in Muslim lands with corrupt Muslim regimes?
>>   **MoP:** What is the estimated rate at which new recruits formally join Al-Qaida and its associated movements?

>   **Intermediate Objective:** Legitimize the movement to the *Umma*.
>>   **MoP:** Do Muslims in Muslim lands feel Al-Qaida's global jihad is justified?
>>   **MoP:** Do Muslims outside Muslim lands feel Al-Qaida's global jihad is justified?

>   **Intermediate Objective:** Inspire independent jihad action.
>>   **MoP:** How many Al-Qaida sympathizers have attempted jihad action?
>>   **MoP:** How many Al-Qaida inspired attacks succeeded and what was the scope of their damage?

Intermediate Objective: Decrease foreign popular support for its government's occupation of Muslim lands.

> **MoP:** Do the citizens of countries with occupation forces in Muslim lands support the occupation (public opinion polls, social media surveys, etc.)?
> **MoP:** Are there any political events in countries with occupation forces in Muslim lands that indicate increasing or decreasing support for the occupation?
> **MoP:** Are there any organized efforts in countries with occupation forces in Muslim lands seeking to publicly discredit the occupation (protests, etc.)?

Intermediate Objective: Decrease popular support for corrupt Muslim regimes.

> **MoP:** Do the citizens subject to corrupt Muslim regimes support the regime (public opinion polls, social media surveys, etc.)?
> **MoP:** Are there any political events in countries with corrupt Muslim regimes that indicate increasing or decreasing support for the regime?
> **MoP:** Are there any organized efforts in countries with corrupt Muslim regimes seeking to publicly discredit the regime (protests, etc.)?

Military LOE:

Intermediate Objective: Force a protracted war.

> **MoP:** How long has the war been active?
> **MoP:** Do the *mujahidin* maintain the ability to continue the global jihad?
> **MoP:** Do the foreign forces continue to commit resources to the war effort?

Intermediate Objective: Inflict heavy casualties on occupation forces.

> **MoP:** How many casualties have occupation forces suffered?
> **MoP:** What is the occupation force casualty rate?

Economic LOE:

Intermediate Objective: Collapse the economies of the occupation forces' countries.

> **MoP:** What are the economic indicators for each country with occupation forces in Muslim lands?
> **MoP:** Is the economy of any country with occupation forces in Muslim lands getting worse?
> **MoP:** Are *mujahidin* actions linked to economic decline in any country with occupation forces in Muslim lands?

Intermediate Objective: Prevent exploitation of Muslim resources by the infidels.

> **MoP:** Do the infidels reap unfair benefits from Muslim oil production?
> **MoP:** Do the infidels reap unfair benefits from any other Muslim resources?

4.2 – Systemic Assessment Demonstration

The preceding Systemic Assessment model formulation may support development of numerous storylines given enough data. However, this study presents a focused assessment that develops only one Storyline to demonstrate the model's application. The focused assessment demonstration examines the strategic impact of OIF on Al-Qaida's strategy. This demonstration is limited by its restriction to open source information, but it demonstrates each step of Systemic Assessment and shows that useful results can be gleaned even with limited data.

STEP 1 – Measurement:

This demonstration provides answers to two MoEs and two MoPs to demonstrate the Measurement step and provide enough information to produce a minimal Systemic Analysis, Storyline, and Feedback.

End State: All foreign forces leave Muslim lands.
MoE: Do foreign occupation forces remain in Muslim lands? What is their disposition?

Iraq: American troop strength in Iraq reached as high as 157,800 in 2008 plus coalition forces.[48] However, by the end of 2011, virtually all American troops had withdrawn from Iraq.

Saudi Arabia: Between 2001 and 2003, American troop presence increased in Saudi Arabia with the beginning of regime change operations in Afghanistan and then Iraq. However, American success in Iraq allowed the U.S. to relocate all military forces other than a training component and the required embassy security and attaché complement outside Saudi Arabia.

Afghanistan: The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troop strength in Afghanistan at the end of 2012 stood at over 102,000 from 50 total contributing nations, a downward trend that is planned to continue.[49] After the initial invasion in 2001, the American presence stood at just over 5,000 troops; however, by the peak of the "surge" in 2011, there were

about 98,000 American forces in Afghanistan plus other coalition forces. The American force

presence in Afghanistan decreased to about 65,000 by the end of 2012.

End State: All Muslim lands are under legitimate Muslim authority.
MoE: Are any of the Muslim lands transitioning from foreign or illegitimate authority to a
    legitimate Muslim authority?

Al-Qaida has experienced setbacks and gains relative to this MoE and is currently

attempting to capitalize on the opportunities posed by the "Arab Spring." Al-Qaida has stated

that its goal is to eliminate all foreign or illegitimate rule in Muslim lands, but listed five as

specific priorities due to their particularly egregious corruption: Qaddafi (Libya), Mubarak

(Egypt), the Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia), Musharraf (Pakistan), and Bouteflika (Algeria). Between

1996 and August 2008, the governing authorities within the Muslim lands remained unchanged

other than two setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan.[50] In 2008, President Musharraf stepped down,

allowing for a democratically-elected government in Pakistan that has arguably led to strained

relations with the United States in its Global War on terror. Nonetheless, Pakistan continues to

conduct operations against Al-Qaida and its affiliates in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas

along the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, and Pakistan also continues to host ISAF supply routes.

The "Arab Spring" began with revolution in Tunisia (December 2010 – January 2011)

and eventually spread to several countries throughout the Muslim lands. Revolutionary

movements overthrew Qaddafi and Mubarak, eliminating two more of Al-Qaida's priority rulers.

Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and others have also experienced, and continue

to experience various levels of instability. Additionally, Syria remains locked in a civil war that

may (or may not) result in the overthrow of another largely secular Muslim regime. The long-

term impact of the Arab Spring is yet to be seen, but the initial results indicate actual and

potential progress toward Al-Qaida's desired end state. The Arab Spring opened up maneuver

space for Al-Qaida in places such as Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria. The rise of the Muslim

Brotherhood in Egypt (while a rival to Al-Qaida) has moved Egypt closer to the *Sharia*, an

important step given Egypt's strategic location. Despite these successes, many of the key

countries in Muslim lands (i.e. Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq) remain under foreign or

illegitimate Muslim authority. Therefore, Al-Qaida's desired end state remains far from full

achievement, but is improving.

Intermediate Objective: Inflict heavy casualties on occupation forces.
MoP: How many casualties have occupation forces suffered?

American forces sustained almost 34,600 casualties, 4,471 of which were fatalities,

during OIF.[51] OIF casualties stopped with the removal of all American forces from Iraq at the

end of 2011, but this was somewhat offset by an increase in casualties in Afghanistan associated

with the increased number of troops deployed there for the surge. However, casualties continue

to decrease with the drawdown of the surge in Afghanistan.

Intermediate Objective: Collapse the economies of occupation forces' countries.
MoP: Is the economy of any country with occupation forces in Muslim lands getting worse?

U.S. public debt more than tripled between 1996 and 2012, rising from $5.2 trillion to

$16.1 trillion.[52] Domestic spending accounts for most of the deficit increase; however, high

levels of defense spending since the 9/11 attacks have also contributed to the deficit. Public debt

now exceeds annual GDP generating domestic and international uncertainty about the U.S.

government's ability to fulfill its strategic commitments.

STEP 2 – Systemic Analysis:

Systemic Analysis consists of the effort to extract meaning from the measures by

examining their relationships to each other. Systemic Analysis provides the information for the

Storylines but does not result in products of its own. Therefore, this paper demonstrates

Systemic Analysis by describing the considerations that lead to the Storyline.

- Consider the relationships between foreign occupation force dispositions in Muslim countries resulting from OIF.

- Consider the relationship between the increased number of foreign occupation forces in Muslim lands and Al-Qaida's intermediate objectives to inflict casualties on and collapse the economies of foreign occupation forces.

- Consider the relationship between the decreasing number of foreign occupation forces in one country and progress toward overthrowing corrupt Muslim rulers in another. Also consider the impact of the Arab Spring to these relationships.
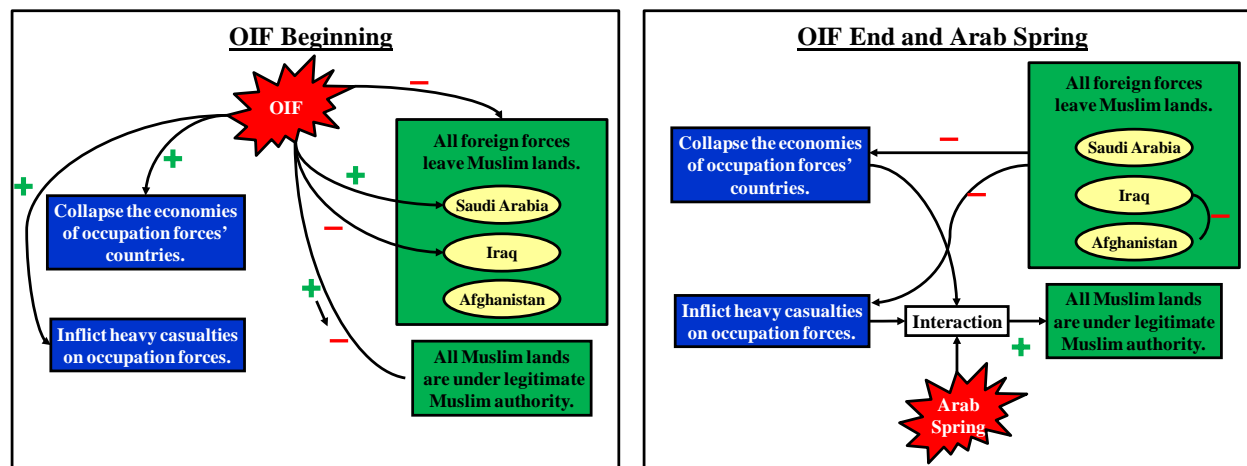
STEP 3 – Storylines:

Figure 6: Storylines - OIF Impact to Al-Qaida's Strategy

- The American led invasion of Iraq (OIF) greatly increased foreign occupation force presence in Muslim lands – at least temporarily – resulting in a strong negative impact to Al-Qaida's desired end state (*all foreign forces leave Muslim lands*).

- OIF resulted in an end to the American military occupation of Saudi Arabia, a positive outcome toward Al-Qaida's desired end state (*all foreign forces leave Muslim lands*). Al-Qaida had identified the American occupation of Saudi Arabia as one of its primary grievances. Therefore, OIF produced an overall negative impact to this end state, but also produced a positive local impact to the same end state.

- OIF also positively impacted two of Al-Qaida's intermediate objectives by increasing the American economic burden (*collapse the economies of occupation forces' countries*) and increasing opportunities to kill Americans and their allies (*inflict heavy casualties on occupation forces*).

- OIF initially presented Al-Qaida with opportunities to progress toward its end state, *all Muslim lands under legitimate Muslim authority*, because the disbandment of the Baath party and the ensuing instability allowed Al-Qaida in Iraq to conduct a sustainable insurgency.

- The coalition (foreign and Iraqi) forces eventually defeated the insurgency, preventing an opportunity from turning to strategic gains. However, the defeat meant American troops were no longer needed in Iraq, reducing the overall number of foreign occupation forces in Muslim lands.

- The American redeployment from Iraq negatively impacted Al-Qaida's intermediate objectives by reducing the foreign troop casualty rate and reducing the American economic burden. It also decreased Al-Qaida's end state opportunities in Afghanistan by freeing forces for the surge to prevent the return of Taliban rule but ensured continued economic burden and foreign force casualties to make up for the decreases in Iraq.

- The Arab Spring was a systemic shock (strategic surprise) that presented Al-Qaida with many opportunities to make gains toward achieving its end states. Al-Qaida has seized on the opportunity to commence operations in newly-opened areas such as Libya, Syria, and Egypt, betting that the Americans lack the political will to commit ground troops to stop them because of their heavy involvement in Afghanistan and recent heavy involvement in Iraq.[53] Their bet has since turned out to be a good one.

Feedback:

Al-Qaida should consider modifying its strategy in the near term. It should maintain the end state of "all foreign forces leave Muslim lands" as a long-term goal, but in the near term, Al-Qaida should strive to keep as many American forces engaged in Afghanistan as possible. The Americans have demonstrated that they are more likely to use forces if they are available, as demonstrated by the surge in Afghanistan that accompanied the drawdown in Iraq. They have also demonstrated reluctance to engage ground troops in *new locations* while they are heavily committed elsewhere (at least since the 2003 invasion of Iraq). The Americans plan to continue to draw down in Afghanistan through the end of 2014, making a flexible response to Al-Qaida in other locations more operationally feasible, but political will to respond will remain low. If Al-Qaida can act decisively to take advantage of the Arab Spring, they may be able to achieve success before the Americans can muster the political will to act. They may be able to further

erode American political will by giving the Americans a bitter send-off with a surge in violence against American interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere and declare an *mujahidin* victory - contributing to Al-Qaida's Information LOE objectives.

The American response to this assessment should be to consider creative ways Al-Qaida may attempt to surge violence against American interests and to consider flexible response options to this surge as well as to Al-Qaida's operations in new areas. Al-Qaida unintentionally drew the Americans into Afghanistan with a spectacular coordinated attack on 9/11. Would they attempt another such attack, likely against American interests but not on American soil, to declare the futility of eleven years of American efforts to prevent such a reoccurrence? The Americans also responded to the extreme instability in Iraq and Afghanistan caused primarily by Al-Qaida-sponsored and supported insurgencies with greater commitments (the surges) of American troops. Would Al-Qaida concentrate efforts at reigniting mass instability in one of these places again, possibly with WMD, to show that the surges were nothing more than a waste of American resources? Either of these scenarios could present the United States with sentiments reminiscent of Vietnam resulting in even further diminished political will to commit ground forces against Al-Qaida.

5 – CONCLUSION

Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad resides in the strategic level of war; therefore, this research effort's model formulation is most appropriate for strategic policymakers such as the Central Command (CENTCOM) commander. The Systemic Assessment model formulation applied to this strategy provides the CENTCOM commander the flexibility to comprehensively examine Al-Qaida's strategy or to focus on how specific events impact Al-Qaida's strategy. The demonstration of the methodology proved that applying limited information to the model can produce significant insights and generate thought-provoking feedback that can help shape CENTCOM's counter-strategy.

The model has potential to uncover many more strategic insights than the scope of this research effort allowed. Follow-on research should include a comprehensive assessment by answering all MoEs and MoPs using both open source and classified information. An additional research recommendation is to identify any changes to Al-Qaida's strategy and update the model formulation. The final recommendation for follow-on research is to apply the model at the operational level, examining specific countries or regions where Al-Qaida is actively pursuing its intermediate objectives.

Al-Qaida adopted a strategy that its leaders believed would succeed in the face of American resistance. Al-Qaida then adapted in response to the American counter-strategy and seized opportunities that arose during the Arab Spring. The United States must also adapt in response to Al-Qaida's strategy. The Systemic Assessment model formulated to examine Al-Qaida's strategy for global jihad enables American strategic policymakers to identify the successes, failures, and limitations of Al-Qaida's strategy in order to better anticipate the feasible range of future Al-Qaida operations and develop counter-strategies to defeat them.

APPENDIX A: Al-Qaida's Means

Al-Qaida does not have the resources of a nation-state to centrally organize, train, and equip a large conventional force. Therefore, it must rely on unconventional means, outsourcing its operations through a network of personal relationships. Al-Qaida's means are dispersed among Muslim populations throughout the world, allocated and utilized through influence and persuasion rather than through authoritative command and control. Bin Laden demonstrates this relationship:

> *[W]e call on everyone who believes in God and wants reward to comply with His will to kill the Americans and seize their money wherever and whenever they find them. We also call on the religious scholars, their leaders, their youth, and their soldiers, to launch the raid on the soldiers of Satan, the Americans, and whichever devil's supporters are allied with them, to rout those behind them so that they will not forget it.*[54]

The final element of the strategy equation (means) can be derived from this statement and an examination of the Al-Qaida organization.

Doctrine: Al-Qaida maintains a rich doctrinal discussion in various online and published forums such as the Al-Qaida Internet journal, *Tala'i Khurasan* (*The Khurasan Vanguards*). The scope of these discussions ranges from strategy to tactics and includes applications of Western and Eastern military thought on war in the context of Islamic ideology. For example, Al-Muqrin's work exhibits elements of Clausewitzian influence in his strategic views on war while paying homage to Mao in his operational phasing of guerrilla warfare.

Organization: The 911 Commission reported the structure of Al-Qaida main as being organized into a leadership council and six functional cells as depicted in Figure 7. The Al-Qaida *Shura* Advisory council is comprised of the Emir's (Bin Laden then Al-Zawahiri) inner circle. The Foreign Purchases Committee serves the acquisitions function. The *Sharia* and Political Committee is responsible for issuing Islamic legal guidance and *fatwas*. The Finance

Committee is responsible for fundraising and other budgetary matters. The Security Committee

is responsible for physical and information security. The Military Committee is responsible for

planning and training for combat action. The Information Committee is responsible for

propaganda and media affairs.[55]

Al-Qaida as a whole is organized as a network of networks in a cellular structure that

prevents the collapse of one cell from creating a ripple effect throughout the entire organization.

The structure supports unity of effort, but not unity of command. Mother Al-Qaida acts in an

advising and supporting role to its associated movements such as Al-Qaida in Iraq, Al-Qaida in

the Arabian Peninsula, and Al-Qaida Trans Sahel. These Al-Qaida cells are responsible for

planning and executing their own operations, but receive material, training, and financial support
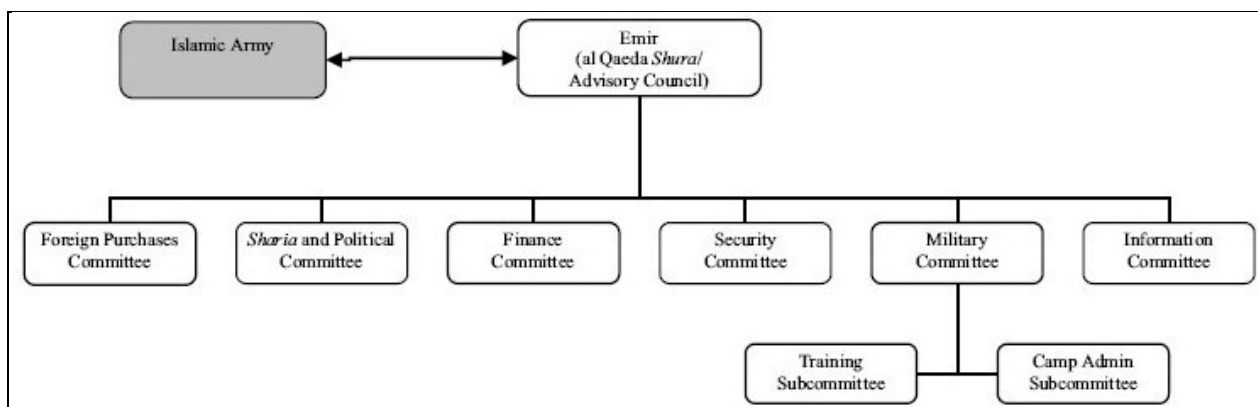
from Al-Qaida main.

Figure 7: Al-Qaida Organizational Structure[56]

Training: Al-Qaida provides tactical training to jihadist recruits through several forums.

Al-Qaida funds and operates training camps in regions where the movement has established

reasonable sanctuary such as Afghanistan prior to the overthrow of the Taliban and the recent

Al-Qaida-controlled region in Mali, though that has since been broken up.[57] They also offer

tactical training through a variety of internet sources such as instructional videos, manuals, and

online discussion forums. Al-Qaida has also implemented an outreach program in which trainers

travel to meet with cells to provide mentorship as a means of getting around the loss of several training camps since 2001.[58]

Material: Al-Qaida materials for conducting global jihad come from the black market and from commercially-available sources. Computer and communications equipment is generally commercial off-the-shelf products. Arms can come from any number of sources such as captured military grade supplies, black market acquisitions, and commercially-available resources. Additionally, Al-Qaida relies on improvised arms such as home-made bombs.

Leadership: The organizational structure of Al-Qaida is very flat, meaning that leadership is decentralized. The flat structure and decentralized leadership minimizes the necessary contact points between cells. This protects the integrity of the overall organization in the event a cell is infiltrated, captured, or otherwise compromised. This structure holds at the strategic level (Mother Al-Qaida to its associated movements) as well as at the operational level (between the associated movement leadership and their tactical cells).

Personnel: Al-Qaida calls on every Muslim to participate in the global jihad. Al-Zawahiri specifically writes, "Muslims need to rush for Jihad and contribute everything they have of weapons, finances, efforts, men, and expertise."[59] He claims it is the duty of all Muslims to participate in the global jihad. However, Bin Laden holds the highest expectations for Muslims between the ages of 15 and 25 for recruitment to the jihad. Those younger than 15 are still children subject to the supervision of their parents, while those older than 25 are expected to be engaged with family commitments such as raising their own children.[60] Additionally, Al-Qaida specifically calls on the Islamic elites to enact regime change in their own countries in support of the global jihad.[61]

Facilities: There is little public information available about specific current Al-Qaida facilities due to their attempts to maintain hidden as well as the classification level that would likely be associated Western knowledge of such facilities. However, video footage of pre 9/11 training camps in Afghanistan reveal facilities that were of low quality by Western military standards, but sufficient for executing the training mission. There is no reason to believe current training facilities are comparable. Additionally, video-taped communiqués and other Al-Qaida propaganda imply that Al-Qaida has access to at least one facility capable of supporting professional media production. Finally, Al-Qaida's doctrine calls for urban cells to blend into the local population, living on the local economy thereby securing access to facilities vital for preparing for and executing Al-Qaida business such as internet cafés, gyms, and public transportation.

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[1] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88.

[2] Osama Bin Laden formally declared jihad against the United States in a communiqué known as the "Ladenese Epistle" on August 23, 1996.

[3] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, JP 3-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), GL-5.

[4] JP 3-0, GL-5.

[5] Clinton R. Clark and Timothy J. Cook, "A Practical Approach to Effects-Based Operational Assessment," *Air and Space Power Journal* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 82-99.

[6] For more on the levels of assessment, see JP 5-0 *Joint Operations Planning*, Appendix D, p. D6-D8.

[7] Robert S. Kaplan and David Norton, "The Balanced Scorecard: Measures that Drive Performance," Harvard Business Review 70, no. 1 (January–February 1992): (Reprint #92105.), 72.

[8] Clark and Cook, 87.

[9] Clark and Cook, 87.

[10] Clark and Cook, 90.

[11] Clark and Cook, 97-98.

[12] Personal observation by the author while serving as the Operational Assessment Team Chief at the 603rd Air and Space Operations Center at Ramstein Air Base, Germany between July 2009 and July 2012.

[13] Clausewitz, 89.

[14] Andrew Ilachinski, *Land Warfare and Complexity, Part 1: Mathematical Background and Technical Sourcebook* (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, July 1996), 184.

[15] Clausewitz, 177.

[16] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 8 November 2010 (As Amended Through 15 November 2012), 294.

[17] Colin S. Gray, *Airpower for Strategic Effect* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2012), 45.

[18] JP 1-02, 225.

[19] JP 1-02, 106.

[20] JP 1-02, 185.

[21] JP 3-0, V-6.

[22] Richard H. Shultz, *Strategic Culture and Strategic Studies: An Alternative Framework for Assessing al-Qaeda and the Global* Jihad *Movement*, JSOU Report 12-4 (MacDill Air Force Base, Florida: JSOU Press, May 2012), 15.

[23] Shultz, 16.

[24] Osama Bin Laden, "The World Islamic Front," *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, ed. Bruce Lawrence, intro. Bruce Lawrence, trans. James Howarth (London, UK: Verso-New Left Books, 2005), 58-59. (hereafter *Messages to the World*)

[25] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 26.

[26] Osama Bin Laden, "The World Islamic Front," *Messages to the World*, 58-62.

[27] Jim Lacey, ed., *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 4, 11, 35, 48, 88, 123, 147, 162.

[28] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner," *His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri*, trans. Laura Mansfield, analysis Laura Mansfield (USA: TLG Publications, 2006), 110. (hereafter "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner")

[29] Osama Bin Laden, "To The Americans," *Messages to the World*, 163.

[30] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner," 205.

[31] Osama Bin Laden, "World Islamic Front," *Messages to the World*, 58-62.

[32] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Letter from Al-Zawahiri to Al-Zarqawi October 11, 2005," *His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri*, 252. (hereafter "Letter from Al-Zawahiri to Al-Zarqawi")

[33] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner," 117.

[34] Quran 9:5 "When the forbidden months are over, wherever you find the polytheists, kill them, seize them, besiege them, ambush them – but if they turn [to God], maintain the prayer and pay the prescribed alms, let them go on their way, for god is most forgiving and merciful." Quoted by Osama Bin Laden in his Feb 14, 2003 audiotape, "Among a Band of Knights," *Messages to the World*, 187.

[35] Osama Bin Laden, "The Saudi Regime," *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, 42.

[36] Quran, 9:38-39, cited by Osama Bin Laden in "World Islamic Front," *Messages to the World*, 62.

[37] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner," 201-202.

[38] Osama Bin Laden, "Terror for Terror," *Messages to the World*, 121.

[39] Abd Al-Aziz Al-Muqrin *Al-Qa'ida's Doctrine for Insurgency: A Practical Course for Guerrilla War*, Translated and Analyzed by Norman Cigar, (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009), 92.

[40] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Letter from Al-Zawahiri to Al-Zarqawi," 252.

[41] Ibid, 255-256.

[42] Al-Muqrin, 94-102.

[43] Osama bin Laden, "Under Mullah Omar," *Messages to the World*, 98.

[44] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri March 4, 2006," *His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri*, 313.

[45] Ibid, 314.

[46] Ibid, 315.

[47] Ibid, 313-315.

[48] Amy Belasco, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues*, CRS Report for Congress R40682 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, July 2, 2009), 9, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf (accessed February 15, 2013).

[49] International Security Assistance Force, *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures*, February 19, 2013, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf (accessed February 25, 2013).

[50] Iraq has adopted a secular constitution and Afghanistan, though officially an Islamic Republic, is more liberal than it was under the Taliban.

[51] iCasualties.org, http://icasualties.org/Iraq/USCasualtiesByState.aspx (accessed February 25, 2013).

[52] U.S. Department of the Treasury, Bureau of the Public Debt, *Historical Debt Outstanding – Annual*, http://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt.htm (accessed February 13, 2013).

[53] Norman L. Cigar, *Al-Qaida and the Arab Spring: Reacting to Surprise and Adapting to Change*, (manuscript, Marine Corps University, 2013).

[54] Osama Bin Laden, "World Islamic Front," *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, 61.

[55] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "Overview of the Enemy," Staff Statement No. 15, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 2-3.

[56] Staff Statement No. 15, 2.

[57] Rukmini Callimachi, "Al-Qaida Carves Out Own Country in Mali," *Yahoo!News*, January 15, 2013, http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaida-carves-own-country-mali-194907091.html (accessed January 21, 2013).

[58] Shultz, 46-47.

[59] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri March 4, 2006," *His Own Words*, 314.

[60] Osama Bin Laden, "A Muslim Bomb," *Messages to the World*, 91.

[61] Osama Bin Laden, "World Islamic Front," *Messages to the World*, 61.

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